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ABSTRACT

This survey evaluated the attitudes of college juniors and seniors in both regular education (n=20 students) and special education (n=24 students) teacher education programs at Bowling Green State University (Ohio), concerning the inclusion of all students in the regular classroom. Results indicated similar attitudes for both groups. All participants in the special education group strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "familiar with inclusion," while 15 percent of the regular education group were neutral and 5 percent had never heard of inclusion. Three-fourths or more of the respondents in each group agreed that students with disabilities are best educated separately. Over half of both groups disagreed with the statement "the motivation behind inclusion is to save money." Sixty percent or more in each group disagreed with the statement that "'where' is more important than 'what' students are taught." Respondents in special education agreed or strongly agreed that students would benefit from inclusion, yet a majority disagreed with the statement "separating and labeling are not necessary." Respondents in the special education group were more likely than the regular education group to disagree with the statement that "good teachers can teach all students." The contradictory nature of some of the results is noted. Contains 9 references. (JDD)

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A Survey of Attitudes of Undergraduate Education Majors Toward Inclusion

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Abstract

Recently there has been much talk about educating children with disabilities in the regular classroom. Today the debate centers on "inclusion." It is becoming a hot topic in many education programs--both regular and special education. This study evaluated (by survey) the attitudes of college students in teacher-education programs (both regular and special education) concerning the inclusion of all students in the regular classroom, and other possible motivations behind inclusion.

A Survey of Attitudes of Undergraduate Education Majors Toward Inclusion

Educating students with disabilities in the regular classroom with their age-like peers has been a topic of debate--especially since the introduction of the regular education initiative (REI) in 1986 by Madeline C. Will, former Assistant Secretary of Education (Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994). Since the introduction of REI, there has been a great deal of tension, especially evident in educational journals and books from both proponents and opponents of the REI (see Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Kauffman, 1989; Hallahan & Kauffman, 1994; McLesky, Skiba, & Wilcox, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1992). Due to the nature of the movement (top-down), it will be interesting to evaluate the attitudes of those people at the "bottom"--the future teachers who will be partially responsible for its implementation when and if some form of inclusion occurs.

In Kauffman's article (1989), "The Regular Education Initiative As Reagan-Bush Education Policy: A Trickle-Down Theory of The Hard-To-Teach," several viewpoints are outlined having to do with the regular education initiative. Those viewpoints can be

summarized by the following statements (note: these positions are not necessarily those of Kauffman, 1989):

1) The primary motivation behind inclusion is to save money.
2) Students with special needs will benefit from the inclusive classroom.
3) Some students are best educated in a separate classroom/facility.
4) Separating and labeling students is not necessary to provide a quality education to them.
5) Good teachers can teach all students.
6) Separating students with special needs is unethical.
7) Good teachers can teach all students.
8) It is more important where a student is educated, than what he is taught.
9) Only minor adjustments will be needed to teach all students in the regular classroom.

Again, the above statements seem to represent ideas outlined by Kauffman (1989), both for and against the inclusion of all students in the regular classroom. These statements, and Kauffman's article have both been subject to debate (see McLeskey,

Skiba, & Wilcox, 1990; Pugach, 1990; Goetz & Sailor, 1990). However, these ideas have been incorporated into the survey of attitudes evaluated in this research paper.

Method

Materials

A survey consisting of: (1) a definition of inclusion; (2) personal information section; and (3), survey statements, was given to 44 undergraduate education majors. Each section of the survey will be briefly described.

Definition of inclusion

The definition used in the survey read, "the education of all students, both with and without disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, behavioral problems...), in a regular elementary, junior high, or high school classroom."

Personal information

The personal information section consisted of five questions asking for the subject's: (1) major/program affiliation; (2) specialization (e.g., learning disabilities, social studies...); (3) class rank; (4) gender; and (5) approximate GPA by category (e.g., 1.0-2.0, 2.1-2.5...3.5-4.0).

The survey statements

The survey statements were adapted from the list of opinions given previously in this report. The response requirements consisted of a six choice continuum that appeared as: SA, A, N, D, SD (i.e., SA= strongly agree; A= agree; N= neutral; D= disagree; SD= strongly disagree).

Subjects

The subjects who were surveyed include undergraduate students enrolled in teacher education programs at Bowling Green State University the first summer session of 1994. Specifically, one class (i.e., a class being taught in the summer of 1994) of students majoring in special education, and one class of students majoring in regular education were surveyed. The total group of subjects included 44 students with 20 regular education, and 24 special education majors.

The make-up of the group according to the self-report on the survey consisted of six juniors, and 38 seniors. Of the 44 people, 38 were females and 6 were males. The grade point averages were primarily above 3.0, with 11 below (lower than 3.0), and 33 above.

Results

The results were reported separately (i.e., percent of respondents in special education versus percent of respondents in regular education). The results are listed in the following table.

Survey Results

Attitude Statements* *summarized to fit table	% Responses Special Education Majors					% Responses Regular Education Majors				
	SA	A	N	D	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
Familiar With Inclusion	33	67	--	--	--	35	45	15	5	--
The Motivation Behind Inclusion Is To Save Money	--	12	21	50	17	5	10	20	55	10
Students Will Benefit From Inclusion	4	50	25	17	4	30	45	25	--	--
Students with Disabilities Are Best Educated Separately	54	42	4	--	--	20	55	10	10	5

Attitude Statements*	% Responses Special Education Majors					% Responses Regular Education Majors				
	SA	A	N	D	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
Inclusion Will Cost More Than Education Does Now	8	17	54	21	--	5	5	45	35	10
Separating And Labeling Is Not Necessary	8	21	13	54	4	30	60	5	5	--
Good Teachers Can Teach All students	8	13	29	38	12	--	55	10	20	15
Separating Students Is Unethical	--	21	21	54	4	--	10	40	40	10
"Where" Is More Important Than "What" Students Are Taught	--	12	17	42	29	--	15	25	40	20

Attitude Statements*	% Responses Special Education Majors					% Responses Regular Education Majors				
	SA	A	N	D	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
Only Minor Adjustments Will Be Needed For Inclusion's Success	--	13	8	33	46	5	15	5	50	25

Discussion

The results of this study seem to indicate similar attitudes of both groups of college students. All participants in the special education group indicated that they either strongly agreed, or agreed with the statement "familiar with inclusion." In the regular education group, a majority also either strongly agreed, or agreed. However, some were neutral (15%), and 5% had never heard of inclusion before.

Another varying result includes the responses to the statements "students will benefit from inclusion," and "separating and labeling are not necessary." The results to these statements indicated that a majority of the special education group either responded "SA" or "A" to the former (students will benefit); yet a majority of the same group responded "D" to the latter (separating). These response patterns are rather ambiguous.

One last interesting response pattern was to the single statement "separating and labeling is not necessary." Fifty-eight percent of the special education group responded either "D" or "SD" compared to the regular education group in which 90% responded

either "SA" or "A." This was probably the largest difference throughout the entire survey.

In conclusion, This study should be considered a pilot investigation of the subjects' attitudes surveyed. None of the results were statistically evaluated due to the rather small homogeneous group of students used. In the future, a more in-depth investigation seems to be warranted based on the somewhat mixed results of the present study.

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